THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) and (b) The Government are aware of the divergent views expressed by the basin States about the water balance and feasibility studies done by National Water Development Agency (NWDA) on the various link proposals. To overcome the apprehension of the States, the Union Government has set-up a Task Force in December 2002 with a view to bring about a consensus among the States and provide guidance on norms of appraisal of individual projects and modalities for project funding, etc., for implementing the interlinking of rivers.

(c) The studies of NWDA are circulated to the concerned States inviting their view points. The views of States along with clarifications of NWDA are discussed in the meetings of Technical Advisory committee, Government Body & NWDA Society held from time to time, in which States are represented.

Watershed development projects

1531. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have announced any plan to develop 62 lakh hectares of wasteland/degraded lands of the country under new watershed development projects;

(b) if so, the salient features of the plan and the details of progress made so far;

(c) the funds allocated for the purpose, State-wise; and

(d) the manner in which the States are likely to be benefited as on date particularly the State of Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) and (b) Watershed Development Projects for the treatment of the wasteland/ degraded lands in the country are sanctioned by the Ministry of Rural Development under Area Development Programmes namely the Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP), the Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and the Desart Development

Programme (DDP) on watershed basis in accordance with the Guidelines for Watershed Development with effect from 1.4.1995.

The number of projects and area sanctioned under IWDP, DPAP & DDP from 1.4.1995 to 2002-03 and during 2003-04 (till 10-12-2003) are given as under:—

(Area in lakh ha.)

Year	IWDP		DPAP		DDP	
	No. of projects	Area Sanctioned	No. of Sanctioned	Area projects	No. of projects	Area Sanctioned
1995-96 to 2003-03	472	40.59	16268	81.34	8314	31.57
2003-04	107	5.59	2535	12.67	1551	7.75

(c) No State-wise allocation of funds is made under these Programmes. However, allocation of funds is made, programme-wise. During the current financial year i.e. 2003-2004 an amount of Rs. 295.00 crores under QPAR Rs. 265.00 crores under DDP and Rs. 335.00 crores under IWDP have been allocated for implementation of the projects under these programmes.

(d)The States including Gujarat are likely to be benefited by the in-situ soil and moisture conservation measures under these programmes, which result in improvement in the availability of surface and ground water. The projects under these programmes also help in improving productivity of the degraded lands/wastelands and generated additional bio-mass, especially fuel-wood and fodder, creating more employment in rural areas in a sustainable manner.

National River Linking Project

1532. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are going ahead with the National River Linking Project;

(b) if so, the details thereof;